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THE TRANSITION FROM SCHOOL TO COLLEGE

BY

LE BARON RUSSELL BRIGGS

HABIT

BY

WILLIAM JAMES

BOSTON AND NEW YORK
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CONTENTS

L. B. R. BRIGGS

THE TRANSITION FROM SCHOOL TO COLLEGE

FROM "SCHOOL, COLLEGE, AND CHARACTER"

THE MISTAKES OF COLLEGE LIFE

FROM "ROUTINE AND IDEALS"

WILLIAM JAMES

A PART OF THE CHAPTER ON HABIT

FROM "PRINCIPLES OF PSYCHOLOGY"

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FROM
SCHOOL, COLLEGE AND
CHARACTER

V

THE TRANSITION FROM SCHOOL TO COLLEGE

COLLEGE life is the supreme privilege of youth. Rich men's sons from private schools may take it carelessly, as something to enjoy unearned, like their own daily bread; yet the true title to it is the title earned in college day by day. The privilege of entering college admits to the privilege of deserving college; college life belongs to the great things, at once joyous and solemn, that are not to be entered into lightly.

Now the things that are not to be entered into lightly (such as marriage and the ministry) are often the things that men enter prepared viciously or not prepared at all; and college life is no exception. "There had always lain a

pleasant notion at the back of his head,' says Mr. Kipling of Harvey Cheyne's father, who had left the boy to the care of a useless wife, "that some day, when he had rounded off everything and the boy had left college, he would take his son to his heart and lead him into his possessions. Then that boy, he argued, as busy fathers do, would instantly become his companion, partner, and ally; and there would follow splendid years of great works carried out together, — the old head backing the young fire." Such fatal gaps in calculation, common with preoccupied fathers, are not uncommon with teachers, — the very men whose lifework is fitting boys for life.

To prepare a boy for examinations that admit to college requires skill, but is easy; to prepare a boy for college is a problem that no teacher and no school has ever solved. In the widest sense, the transition from school to college is almost coincident with the transition from youth

to manhood, — often a time when the physical being is excitable and ill controlled, when the mind suffers from the lassitude of rapid bodily growth, and when the youth's whole conception of his relation to other people is distorted by conceit. Sensitive to his own importance, just beginning to know his power for good or evil, he is shot into new and exciting surroundings, — out of a discipline that drove and held him with whip and rein into a discipline that trusts him to see the road and to travel in it. If we add to this the new and alluring arguments for vice as an expression of fully developed manhood, we have some notion of the struggle in which a boy — away from home, it may be, for the first time — is expected to conquer. The best school is the school that best prepares him for this struggle; not the school that guards him most sternly or most tenderly, nor the school that guards him not at all, but the school that stead-

ily increases his responsibility, and as steadily strengthens him to meet it. The best college is the college that makes him a man.

The first feeling of a Freshman is confusion; the next is often a strange elation at the discovery that now at last his elders have given him his head. "I never shall forget," says a noted preacher, "how I felt when I found myself a Freshman, — a feeling that all restraint was gone, and that I might go to the Devil just as fast as I pleased." This is the transition from school to college.

In a man's life there must be, as everybody knows, a perilous time of going out into the world: to many it comes at the beginning of a college course; to many — possibly to most who go to college at all — it has already come at school. The larger and less protected boarding school or academy is constantly threatened with every vice known to a college; the cloistered private school affords, from its lack

of opportunity for some vices, peculiar temptation to others; the day school, if in or near a large city, contains boys for whose bad habits, not yet revealed, their parents by and by will hold the college responsible. I remember a group of boys going daily from cultivated homes to an excellent school, each of whom, in college, came to one grief or another, and each of whom, I am convinced, had made straight at home and at school the way to that grief. The transition from school to college was merely the continuation in a larger world of what they had begun in a smaller.

A continuation is what the transition ought to be: the problem is how to make it a continuation of the right sort. "What is the matter with your college?" says a teacher who cares beyond all else for the moral and religious welfare of his pupils. "I keep my boys for years: I send them to you in September, and by Christmas half of them

have degenerated. They have lost punctuality; they have lost application; they have no responsibility; and some of them are gone to the bad." "What is the matter with your school," the college retorts, "that in half a dozen years it cannot teach a boy to stand up three months? College is the world; fitting for college is fitting for life: what is the matter with your school?" He who loses his ideals loses the very bloom of life. To see a young man's ideals rapidly slipping away, while his face grows coarser and coarser, is one of the saddest sights in college or out of it. What is his training good for, if it has not taught him the folly, the misery, and the wrong of dabbling in evil? If he must believe that no man is wise till he has come to know the resorts of gamblers and harlots, and has indulged himself for experience' sake in a little gentlemanly vice, can he not put off the acquaintance four years more, by the end

of which time he may have learned some wiser way of getting wisdom? Besides, in the course of those four years (and the chance is better than even) he may meet some girl for whose sake he will be glad that his record has been clean. Cannot a school which closely watches its boys while their characters are moulding teach them to keep their heads level and their hearts true, save them from the wrong that never can be righted, send them to college and through college, faulty it must be, but at least unstained?

The main object of school and college is the same, — to establish character, and to make that character more efficient through knowledge; to make moral character more efficient through mental discipline. In the transition from school to college, continuity of the best influence, mental and moral, is the thing most needful. Oddly enough, the only continuity worthy of the name is often

(in its outward aspect) neither mental nor moral, but athletic. An athlete is watched at school as an athlete, enters college as an athlete; and if he is a good athlete, and if he takes decent care of his body, he continues his college course as an athlete, — with new experiences, it is true, but always with the thread of continuity fairly visible, and with the relation of training to success clearly in view. Palpably bad as the management of college athletics has been and is, misleading as the predominance of athletics in an institution of learning may be, the fact remains that in athletics lies a saving power, and that for many a boy no better bridge of the gap between school and college has yet been found. The Freshman athlete, left to himself, is likely to fall behind in his studies; but unless he is singularly unreasonable or vicious, he is where an older student of clear head and strong will can keep him straight, — can at

least save him from those deplorable falls that, to a greater or less degree, bruise and taint a whole life. "The trouble will begin," said a wise man, talking to sub-Freshmen, "in the first fortnight. Some evening you will be with a lot of friends in somebody's room, when something is proposed that you know is n't just right. Stop it if you can; if not, go home and go to bed, and in the morning you will be glad you did n't stay." The first danger in the transition from boyhood to manhood is the danger in what is called "knowing life." It is so easy to let mere vulgar curiosity pose as the search for truth. A Senior who had been in a fight at a public dance said in defence of himself: "I think I have led a pretty clean life in these four years; but I believe that going among all sorts of people and knowing them is the best thing college life can give us." The old poet knew better: —

"Let no man say there, 'Virtue's flinty wall
Shall lock vice in me; I 'll do none but know all.
Men are sponges, which, to pour out, receive;
Who know false play, rather than lose, deceive;
For in best understandings sin began;
Angels sinned first, then devils, and then man."

Here comes in to advantage the ambition of the athlete. Football begins with or before the college year. Training for football means early hours, clean life, constant occupation for body and mind. Breach of training means ostracism. That this game tides many a Freshman over a great danger, by keeping him healthily occupied, I have come firmly to believe. It supplies what President Eliot calls a "new and effective motive for resisting all sins which weaken or corrupt the body;" it appeals to ambition and to self-restraint; it gives to crude youth a task in which crude youth can attain finish and skill, can feel the power that comes of surmounting tremendous obstacles and of recog-

nition for surmounting them; moreover, like war, it affords an outlet for the reckless courage of young manhood, — the same reckless courage that in idle days drives young men headlong into vice.

Has not hard study, also, a saving power? Yes, for some boys; but for a boy full of animal spirits, and not spurred to intellectual effort by poverty, the pressure is often too gentle, the reward too remote. Such a youth may be, in the first place, too well pleased with himself to understand his relation to his fellow men and the respectability of labor. He may fail to see that college life does not of itself make a man distinguished; in a vague way, he feels that the university is gratefully ornamented by his presence. No human creature can be more complacent than a Freshman, unless it is a Sophomore: yet the Freshman may be simply a being who, with no particular merit of his own, has received a great opportunity; and the Sophomore may

be simply a being who has abused that opportunity for a year.

Now the Freshman meets, in a large modern college, a new theory of intellectual discipline. As Professor Peabody has beautifully expressed it, he passes "from the sense of study as an obligation to the sense of study as an opportunity." Too often he regards study as an inferior opportunity; and having an option between study and loafing, he takes loafing. "In the Medical School," said a first-year medical student, "they give you a lot to do; and nobody cares in the least whether you do it." In other words, the Medical School may rely on the combined stimulus of intellectual ambition and bread and butter: its Faculty need not prod or cosset; it is a place of Devil take the hindmost. Yet the change in the attitude of teacher to pupil is not more sharply marked between college and medical school than between preparatory school and college. "There are

only two ways of getting work out of a *boy*," said a young college graduate. "One is through emulation; the other is to stand behind and kick him.[1] Mr. X [a well-known schoolmaster] says, 'Jones, will you please do this or that;' Mr. Y stands behind Jones and kicks him into college." I do not accept the young graduate's alternative; but I have to admit that many boys are kicked, or whipped, or cosseted, or otherwise personally conducted into college, and, once there, are as hopelessly lost as a baby turned loose in London. "It took me about two years in college to get my bearings," said an earnest man, now a superintendent of schools. "I did n't loaf; I simply did n't know how to get at things. In those days there was nobody to go to for advice; and I had never *read* anything, — had never been inside of a public library. I did n't know where or how to take hold."

[1] Both ways are known in football, besides what is called "cursing up."

This is the story of a man who longed to take hold; and we must remember that many of our college boys do not at first care whether they take hold or not. It is only in football, not in study, that they have learned to tackle, and to tackle low. "A bolstered boy," says a wise mother, "is an unfortunate man." Many of these boys have been bolstered; many are mothers' boys; many have crammed day and night through the hot season to get into college, and, once in, draw a long breath and lie down. The main object of life is attained; and for any secondary object they are too tired to work. The old time-table of morning school gives place to a confusing arrangement which spreads recitations and lectures unevenly over the different days. They walk to a large lecture room, where a man who is not going to question them that day talks for an hour, more or less audibly. He is a long way off;[1] and

[1] A student whose name begins with Y told me once that he had never had a good seat in his life.

though he is talking to somebody, he seems not to be talking to them. It is hard to listen; and if they take notes (a highly educational process) the notes will be poor: besides, if they need notes, they can buy them later. Why not let the lecture go, and sleep, or carve the furniture, or think about something else (girls, for instance)? These boys are in a poor frame of mind for new methods of instruction; yet new methods of instruction they must have. They must learn to depend upon themselves, to become men; and they must learn that hardest lesson of all, — that a man's freedom consists in binding himself: still again, they must learn these things at an age when the average boy has an ill-seasoned body, a half-trained mind, jarred nerves, his first large sum of money, all manner of diverting temptations, and a profound sense of his own importance. How can they be taken down, and not taken down too much, — thrown, and not thrown too

hard? How can they be taught the responsibility of freedom? They face, it may be, an elective system which, at first sight, seems to make elective, not this or that study merely, but the habit of studying at all. Already they have been weakened by the failure of the modern parent and the modern educator to see steadily the power that is born of overcoming difficulties. What the mind indolently shrinks from is readily mistaken, by fond mothers, mercenary tutors, and some better people, as not suited to the genius of the boy in question. "It is too much for Jamie to learn those stupid rules of syntax, when he has a passion for natural history;" or, "George never could learn geometry, — and after all, we none of us use geometry in later life. He expects to be a lawyer, like his father; and I can't think of any good geometry can do him."

The change "from the sense of study as an obligation to the sense of study as

an opportunity" is a noble change for persons mature enough to turn opportunity into obligation: it is not a noble change for those who choose such studies only as they think they can pass with bought notes. Knowledge that does not overcome difficulties, knowledge that merely absorbs what it can without disagreeable effort, is not power; it is not even manly receptivity. Milton, to be sure, patient toiler and conqueror though he was, cried in his pain, "God loves not to plough out the heart of our endeavors with overhard and sad tasks:" but an overhard and sad task may be a plain duty; and even Milton, when he said this, was trying to get rid of what some people would call a plain duty, — his wife. When we consider the mass and the variety of the Freshmen's temptations, and what some one has called the "strain on their higher motives," we wonder more and more at the strength of the temptation to knowledge, whereby so

many stand steady, and work their way out into clear-headed and trustworthy manhood.

One way to deal with these strange, excited, inexperienced, and intensely human things called Freshmen is to let them flounder till they drown or swim; and this way has been advocated by men who have no boys of their own. It is delightfully simple, if we can only shut eye and ear and heart and conscience; and it has a kind of plausibility in the examples of men who through rough usage have achieved strong character. "The objection," as the master of a great school said the other day, "is the waste; and," he added, "it is such an awful thing to waste human life!" This method is a cruel method, ignoring all the sensibilities of that delicate, high-strung instrument which we call the soul. If none but the fittest survived, the cruelty might be defended; but some, who unhappily cannot drown, become cramped swim-

mers for all their days. Busy and worn as a college teacher usually is, thirsty for the advancement of learning as he is assumed always to be, he cannot let hundreds of young men pass before him, unheeded and unfriended. At Harvard College, the Faculty, through its system of advisers for Freshmen, has made a beginning: and though there are hardly enough advisers to go round, the system has proved its usefulness. At Harvard College, also, a large committee of Seniors and Juniors has assumed some responsibility for all the Freshmen. Each undertakes to see at the beginning of the year the Freshmen assigned to him, and to give every one of them, besides kindly greeting and good advice, the feeling that an experienced undergraduate may be counted on as a friend in need.

Whether colleges should guard their students more closely than they do — whether, for example, they should with

gates and bars protect their dormitories against the inroads of bad women — is an open question. For the deliberately vicious such safeguards would amount to nothing; but for the weak they might lessen the danger of sudden temptation. Of what schools should do I can say little; for with schools I have little experience: but this I know, that some system of gradually increased responsibility is best in theory, and has proved good in practice. The scheme of making the older and more influential boys "prefects" has worked well in at least one large preparatory school, and shows its excellence in the attitude of the prefects when they come to college. This scheme makes a confident appeal to the maturity of some boys and the reasonableness of all, trusting all to see that the best hopes of teacher and scholar are one and the same.

The system of gradually increased

responsibility at school must be met halfway by the system of friendly supervision at college, — supervision in which the older undergraduates are quite as important as the Faculty. The Sophomore who enjoys hazing (like the dean who employs spies) is an enemy to civilization. The true state of mind, whether for professor or for student, was expressed by a college teacher long ago. "I hold it," he said, "a part of my business to do what I can for any wight that comes to this place." When all students of all colleges, and all boys of all schools, believe, and have the right to believe, that their teachers are their friends; when the educated public recognizes the truth that school and college should help each other in lifting our youth to the high ground of character, — the school never forgetting that boys are to be men, and the college never forgetting that men have been boys, — we shall come to the

ideal of education. Toward this ideal we are moving, slowly but steadily. When we reach it, or even come so near it as to see it always, we shall cease to dread the transition from school to college.

FROM
ROUTINE AND IDEALS

THE MISTAKES OF COLLEGE LIFE

A TALK TO BOYS ON THE POINT OF ENTERING COLLEGE

IN a certain sense, college is the place for mistakes. In college a young man tests his strength, and, while testing it, is protected from the results of failure far more effectively than he will ever be protected afterward. The youth who is determined to succeed in public speaking may stand up again and again in a college debating club, may fail again and again, and through his failure may rise to success; whereas if he should put off his efforts until some political campaign had called him to the stump, no audience would listen to him, or even let him go

on. "The mistakes that make us men," says Dr. Lyman Abbott, "are better than the accuracies that keep us children." Yet even in college there are mistakes by which the career of a happy, well-meaning youth is suddenly darkened; and though he may learn out of the very bitterness of his experience, he is never quite the same again.

All boys with a fair chance in the world have at their best a common motive, — to be of some use, to lead active, efficient lives, to do something worth doing, and to do it well, to become men on whom people instinctively and not in vain rely. Men and women may be divided roughly into two classes, — those who are "there," and those who are "not there." The "not there" people may be clever, may be what is called "good company," may have, even after you know them pretty well, a good deal of personal charm; but once know them through and through, and you have no use for

them. The "there" people may be unpolished, unmagnetic, without social charm; but once understand that they are "there," and you get help and comfort from the mere knowledge that there are such people in the world. Every boy in his heart of hearts admires a man who is "there," and wishes to be like him; but not every boy (and here is the sad part of it) understands that to be "there" is the result of a long process, the result of training day by day and year by year, precisely as to be a sure man (I do not say a brilliant man) in the pitcher's box or behind the bat is the result of long training. A single decision or indecision, an act of a moment or a moment's failure to act, may turn a whole life awry; but the weakness of that moment is only the expression of a weakness which for months or for years has been undermining the character, or at best the result of a failure to train body, mind, and heart for the emergencies of life.

In this training we can learn, if we will, from other people's experience; and although boys are loath to accept anybody's experience but their own, and are not always wise enough to accept that, it is yet worth while to show them some dangers which other boys have met or have failed to meet, that they may not be taken unawares. A great man, almost too far above the temptations of the average boy to understand them, has condemned talking to boys and young men about temptation; he would fill their minds with good things: but there are no boys whose minds are so full of good things that a temptation cannot get in edgewise. An absorbing interest in a good something or a good somebody holds back and may finally banish the worst temptations; it is quite as important to interest boys in good things as to take away their interest in bad ones: but when all is said, the lightest hearted boy who comes to manhood must come

to it "through sorrows and through scars."

To many boys the beginning of college life is the first step into the world. Its dangers are much like those of other first steps into the world, yet with this difference: the college boy has the advantage of living where ideals are noble, and the disadvantage (if he is weak or immature) of living where he need not get heartily tired day after day in keeping long, inevitable hours of work. This disadvantage is indeed a privilege, but a privilege which like all privileges is bad unless accorded to a responsible being. To discipline one's self, to hold one's self responsible, is ever so much better than to be disciplined, to be held responsible by somebody else; but it is a task for a man. Naturally enough, then, the mistakes and the sins of college life are commonly rooted in boyish irresponsibility.

The average youth takes kindly to the

notion that in the first year or two at college he need not be bound by the ordinary restraints of law-abiding men and women. "Boys will be boys," even to the extent of sowing wild oats. Time enough to settle down by and by; meanwhile the world is ours. A year or so of lawlessness will be great fun, and will give us large experience; and even if we shock some good people, we are but doing the traditional thing. A youth who feels thus takes prompt offence if treated, as he says, "like a kid;" yet he may do things so low that any honest child would despise them. Nor is this true of one sex only. I have heard a married woman recount with satisfaction her two nights' work in stealing a sign when she was at college; and her father, a college man, listened with sympathetic joy. I have known a youth who held a large scholarship in money to steal, or — as he preferred to say — "pinch," an instrument worth several dollars from the lab-

oratory where he was trusted as he would have been trusted in a gentleman's parlor. I have even heard of students who bought signs, and hung them up in their rooms to get the reputation of stealing them. Surely there is nothing in college life to make crime a joke. A street "mucker" sneaks into a student's room and steals half a dozen neckties (for which the student has not paid), and nothing is too hard for him; a student steals a poor laundryman's sign for fun: may a gentleman do without censure what sends a "mucker" to jail? If the gentleman is locked up in the evening to be taken before the judge in the morning, his friends are eager to get him out. Yet in one night of ascetic meditation he may learn more than in his whole previous life of his relation to the rights of his fellow men. One of the first lessons in college life is an axiom: Crime is crime, and a thief is a thief, even at an institution of learning. The college thief

has, it is true, a different motive from his less favored brother; but is the motive better? Is there not at the root of it a misunderstanding of one man's relation to another, so selfish that, in those who ought to be the flower of American youth, it would be hardly conceivable if we did not see it with our own eyes? People sometimes wonder at the desire of towns to tax colleges, instead of helping them. A small number of students who steal signs, and refuse to pay bills unless the tradesman's manner pleases them, may well account for it all.

As there is nothing in college life to justify a thief, so there is nothing in it to justify a liar. College boys in their relation to one another are quite as truthful as other people; but some of them regard their dealings with college authorities as some men regard horse-trades. We know them capable of distinguishing truth from falsehood, since their

standard of integrity for their teachers is sensitively high. Their standard for themselves is part of that conceit, of that blind incapacity for the Golden Rule, which is often characteristic of early manhood. To this blindness most books about school and college life contribute. Even the healthier of these books stir the reader's sympathy in behalf of the gentlemanly, happy-go-lucky youth who pulls wool over the eyes of his teachers, and deepen the impression that college boys live in a fairyland of charming foolery, and are no more morally responsible than the gods of Olympus. Plainly such a theory of college life, even if no one holds to it long, nurses a selfishness and an insincerity which may outlast the theory that has nourished them. The man who has his themes written for him, or who cribs at examinations, or who excuses himself from college lectures because of "sickness" in order to rest after or before a

dance, may be clever and funny to read about; but his cleverness and "funniness" are not many degrees removed from those of the forger and the impostor, who may also be amusing in fiction.

Another bad thing in the substitution of excuses, even fairly honest excuses, for work is the weakening effect of it on everyday life. The work of the world is in large measure done by people whose heads and throats and stomachs do not feel just right, but who go about their daily duties, and in doing them forget their heads and throats and stomachs. He who is to be "there" as a man cannot afford to cosset himself as a boy. A well-known railroad man has remarked that he knows in his business two kinds of men: one, with a given piece of work to do before a given time, comes back at the appointed hour and says, "That job is done. I found unexpected difficulties, but it is done;" the other comes back

with "several excellent reasons" why the job is not done. "I have," says the railroad man, "no use for the second of these men." Nor has any business man use for him. The world is pretty cold toward chronic invalids and excuse-mongers. "If you are too sick to be here regularly," it says, "I am sorry for you, but I shall have to employ a healthier man." You will find, by the way, that it is easier to attend all your recitations than to attend half or three-quarters of them. Once open the question of not going, and you see "several excellent reasons" for staying at home. Routine, as all mature men know, steadies nerves, and, when used intelligently, adds contentment to life.

I have spoken of lying to college officers, and of excuses which, if I may use an undergraduate expression, "may be right, but are not stylish right." I come next to the question of responsibility to father and mother in matters of truth and

falsehood. One of the evils from vice of all sorts at college is the lying that results from it. Shame and fear, half disguised as a desire not to worry parents, cut off many a father and mother from knowing what they have a right to know, and what they, if confided in, might remedy. I have seldom seen a student in serious trouble who did not say — honestly enough, I presume — that he cared less for his own mortification than for his father's and mother's. As a rule, one of his parents is threatened with nervous prostration, or oppressed with business cares, or has a weak heart which, as the son argues, makes the receipt of bad news dangerous. Filial affection, which has been so dormant as to let the student do those things which would distress his parents most, awakes instantly at the thought that the parents must learn what he has done. The two severest rebukes of a certain gentle mother were: "You ought to have meant

not to," and "You ought to have been sorry beforehand."

Many a student, knowing that the college must communicate with his father, will not nerve himself to the duty and the filial kindness of telling his father first. I remember a boy who was to be suspended for drunkenness, and who was urged to break the news to his father before the official letter went.

"You don't know my father," he said. "My father is a very severe man, and I can't tell him."

"The only thing you can do for him," was the answer, "is to let him feel that you are able and willing to tell him first, — that you give him your confidence."

"Oh, you don't know him," said the boy again.

"Is there any 'out' about your father?"

"No" (indignantly)! "You would respect him and admire him; but he is a very severe man."

"Then he has a right to hear and

to hear first from you. You cannot help him more than by telling him, or hurt him more than by hiding the truth from him."

A day or two later the boy came back to the college office. "My father is a brick!" he said. In his confession he had learned for the first time how much his father cared for him.

A young man, intensely curious about the wickedness of life, is easily persuaded that the first business of a college student is "to know life," — that is, to know the worst things in it; and, in the pursuit of wisdom, he sets out in the evening, with others, merely to *see* the vice of a great city. He calls at a house where he meets bad men and bad women, and eats and drinks with them. What he eats and drinks he does not know; but in the morning he is still there, with a life stain upon him, and needing more than ever before to confide in father or mother or in some good physician. Yet the people

who can help him most, the people also in whom he must confide or be false to them, are the very people he avoids.

Again, it is hard to prove by cold logic that gambling is wrong. A young man says to himself, "If I wish to spend a dollar in this form of amusement, why should I not? I know perfectly well what I am about I am playing *with* money not playing *for* it. In some countries — in England, for example—clergymen, and good people generally, play whist with shilling stakes, and would not think of playing it without." So of vice he says, "No man knows human nature until he has seen the dark side. I shall be a broader man if I know these things; and some physicians recommend the practice of them in moderation." When we say, "Lead us not into temptation," we forget that one of the worst temptations in the world is the temptation to be led into temptation, — the temptation to gratify vulgar curiosity, and to see on what thin ice we

can walk. No man is safe; no man can tell what he shall do, or what others will do to him, if he once enters a gambling house or a brothel. The history of every city, and the history of every college, will prove what I say. There is no wisdom in looking at such places, — nothing but greenness and folly. The difficulty with gambling is, as some one has said, that "it eats the heart out of a man," — that imperceptibly the playing *with* slips into the playing *for*, until without gambling life seems tame: and the difficulty with vice is that it involves physical danger of the most revolting kind; that it kills self-respect; that it brings with it either shamelessness or a miserable dishonesty for decency's sake; and that it is a breach of trust to those who are, or who are to be, the nearest and the dearest, — a breach of trust to father and mother, and to the wife and children, who may seem remote and unreal, but who to most young men are close at hand. By the

time a boy goes to college, he may well feel responsibility to the girl whom some day he will respect and love, and who, he hopes, will respect and love him. A boy's or man's sense of fair play should show him that it is effrontery in a man who has been guilty of vice with women to ask for a pure girl's love. The time is only too likely to come when a young fellow who has yielded to the tremendous sudden temptation that is thrown at him in college and in the world, will face the bitter question, "Can I tell the truth about myself to the girl I love? If I tell it, I may justly lose her; if I do not tell it, my whole life may be a frightened lie."

> "Who is the Happy Husband? He
> Who, scanning his unwedded life,
> Thanks Heaven, with a conscience free,
> 'T was faithful to his future wife."

Not merely the curiosity which listens to false arguments about life and wisdom, but the awful loneliness of a boy far from home, may lead to vice and misery. The

boy who is used to girls at home, and who knows in his new surroundings no such girls as he knew at home, no such girls as his sisters' friends, is only too likely to scrape an easy acquaintance with some of those inferior girls by whom every student is seen in a kind of glamour, and to whom acquaintance with students is the chief excitement of life. With little education, much giddy vanity, and no refinement, these girls may yet possess a sort of cheap attractiveness. They are, besides, easy to get acquainted with, easy to be familiar with, and interesting simply because they are girls — for the time being, the only accessible girls. I need not dwell on the embarrassment, the sorrow, and even the crime, in which such friendships may end; but I may emphasize the responsibility of every man, young or old, towards every woman. "Every free and generous spirit," said Milton, "ought to be born a knight." It is the part of a man to protect these

girls against themselves. If they know no better than to hint to a student that they should like to see his room some evening, he knows better than to take the hint, — better than to suffer them through him to do what, though it may not stain their character, may yet destroy their good name. No girls stand more in need of chivalry than these vain girls, not yet bad, who flutter about the precincts of a college.

Students know what responsibility means; but their views of it are distorted. They demand it of their elders; in certain parts of athletics they demand it of themselves. Which is the worse breach of faith, to sit up a quarter of an hour later than your athletic trainer allows, or to betray the trust that father and mother have put in you, to gamble away or to spend on low women the money sent you for your term-bill, and to cover all with a lie?

It may be from a dim notion of these

eccentricities in undergraduate judgment that many boys cultivate irresponsibility with a view to social success. Social ambition is the strongest power in many a student's college life, a power compared with which all the rules and all the threats of the Faculty, who blindly ignore it, are impotent, a power that robs boys of their independence, leading them to do things foolish or worse and thereby to defeat their own end. For in the long run, — in the later years of the college course, — the "not there" and the "there" can be clearly distinguished. A student may be poor, he may not play poker, he may not drink, he may be free from all vice, he may not even smoke; and yet, if his virtue is not showy, he will be popular — provided he "does something for his class." "He is a bully fellow," the students say. "He is in training all the time."

I say little of responsibility to younger students. An older student who misleads a younger gets just about the name he

deserves. Even the Sophomore who seriously hazes a Freshman is now in the better colleges recognized as a coward. Cowardice once recognized, cannot long prevail; yet there was a time when it took a deal of courage for a few young men in one of our great colleges to stop an outbreak of hazing. It took a deal of courage; but they did it. After all, a student admires nothing so much as "sand." What he needs is to see that "sand" belongs not merely in war and athletics, but in everyday life, and that in everyday life "sand" may be accumulated. A Harvard student, it is said, was nearly dressed one morning and was choosing a necktie, when his door, which with the carelessness of youth he had left unlocked, suddenly opened. A woman entered, closed the door behind her, put her back to it, and said, "I want fifty dollars. If you don't give it to me, I shall scream." The young man, still examining his neckties, quietly replied,

"You 'd better holler;" and the woman went out. Had he given her money, had he even paid serious attention to her threat, he might have been in her power for life; but his coolness saved him. Another undergraduate, who before coming to college had worked as an engineer, and who was a few years older than most of his class, went one evening to an officer of the college who knew something of him, and said, "I hardly know just how I ought to speak to you; but in my building there is a Freshman who is going to pieces, and a Senior who is largely responsible for it." He then told what he had seen, and gave the names of both men. "If I look this up," said the college officer, "are you willing to appear in it? Are you willing to have your name known?" "I 'd rather not be 'queered,'" he answered; "but if it is necessary to be 'queered,' I will be." All this happened in a college which employs no spies and discourages tale-

bearing. For anything the student knew, the officer himself might think him a malicious informer. The "sand" in the hero of the first of these little stories any boy would see. To see the "sand" in the hero of the second takes some experience; but "sand," and "sand" of the finest quality, was there. This man's notion of the responsibility of older students to younger ones had in it something positive. "You have no idea," said a senator to Father Taylor, the sailor preacher, who had rebuked him for his vote, "You have no idea what the outside pressure was." "Outside pressure, Mr. Senator! Outside pressure! Where were your inside braces?" To run the risk of being thought a common informer when you are not, and to run it because you cannot let a man go under without trying to pull him out, requires such inside braces as few undergraduates possess.

Let me say, however, that there is no

better hope for Harvard College than in the readiness of the strong to help the weak. A youth is summoned to the college office, behindhand in his work, and bad in his way of living. The Faculty has done its best for him, and to no purpose. A student of acknowledged standing in athletics and in personal character appears at the office, and says, "I should like to see whether I can make that man work and keep him straight." This, or something like this, occurs so often that it is an important part of the college life. Moreover, when the strong man comes, he does not come with the foolish notion that he shall help the weak man in the eyes of the college office by pretending that he is not weak. He takes the case as it stands, knowing that his own purpose and that of the college office are one and the same, — to keep the student, if he can be made into a man, and otherwise in all kindness to send him home.

One more responsibility needs mentioning here, — responsibility to our work. In college, it is said, a man of fair capacity may do well one thing beside his college work, and one thing only. Those of us who are so fortunate as to earn our own living must spend most of our waking hours in work. It follows that we must learn to enjoy work or be unhappy. Now we learn to enjoy work by working; to get interested in any task by doing it with all our strength. This is the first lesson of scholarship: without it we cannot be scholars; and only by courtesy can we be called students. This is the first lesson of happy activity in life. In athletics, in music, in study, in business, we "train" ourselves toward the free exercise of our best powers, toward the joy that comes of mastery. A college oarsman once declared that after a season on the slides he felt able to undertake anything. The intellectual interests of a modern university

are bewildering and intense. Among them every intelligent youth can find something worthy of his best labors, something in which his best labors will yield enjoyment beyond price. Right-minded students see the noble opportunity in a college life; and there is no sadder sight than the blindness of those who do not see it until it is lost forever.

While speaking of the intellectual side of college life, I may warn students against becoming specialists too early. Every study has some connection with every other and gets some light from it; but a specialty, seriously undertaken, compels a close study of itself, and may leave little time for other study. An unenlightened specialist is a narrow being; and he who becomes an exclusive specialist before he has been in college two years is usually unenlightened. Even after the choice of a specialty, a student, like a professional man, may wisely

reserve one corner of his mind for something totally different from his specialty, and may find in that little corner a relief which makes him a better specialist. It is good for a man buried in a chemical laboratory to take a course in English poetry; it is good for a man steeped in literature to have a mild infusion of chemistry.

The lazy student (if I may return to him now) finds the thread of his study broken by his frequent absences from the lecture room, and finds the lecture hour a long, dull period of hard seats and wandering thoughts. Note-taking would shorten the hour, soften the seats, simplify the subject, and make the whole situation vastly more interesting. No matter if some clever students are willing to sell him notes, and he has no scruples about buying them; the mere process of note-taking, apart from the education and training in it, gives him something to do in the lecture room, makes it im-

possible for him not to know something of the subject, and shortens his period of cramming for examination. I believe, further, that a student's happiness is increased by a time-table of regular hours for work in each study. The preparation of theses, and the necessity of using library books when other people are not using them, make it hard now and then to follow a time-table strictly; but in general such a table is a wonderful saver of time. If a student leaves one lecture room at ten and goes to another at twelve and has no idea what he wishes to do between ten and twelve, he is likely to do nothing. Even if he has determined to study, he loses time in getting under way — in deciding what to study. Work with a time-table tends to promptness in transition; and when the time-table for the day is carried out, the free hours are truly free, a time of clear and well-earned recreation. At school the morning routine is prescribed by the teacher. At col-

lege, where it should be prescribed by the student, it frequently breaks down. A man's freedom, as viewed with a boy's eyes, is liberty to waste time: it is the luxury of spending the best morning hours in a billiard room, or loafing in a classmate's "study;" the joy of hearing the bell ring and ring for *you*, while you sit high above the slaves of toil and puff the smoke of cigarettes with the superb indifference of a small cloud-compelling Zeus. The peculiar evil in cigarettes I leave for scientific men to explain; I know merely that among college students the excessive cigarette smokers are recognized even by other smokers as representing the feeblest form of intellectual and moral life. At their worst they have no backbone; they cannot tell (and possibly cannot see) the truth; and they loaf. Senator Hoar, in an address to Harvard students, remarked that in his judgment the men who succeed best in life are the men who have made the best

use of the odd moments at college, and that, contrary to the general opinion, it is worse to loaf in college than to loaf in a professional school. The young lawyer, he observed, who has neglected the law may make up his deficiencies in the early years of his practice; "he will have plenty of time then:" but there is no recovery of the years thrown away at college.

Once more, if we could only teach by the experience of others, we should save untold misery. I met not long since a young business man who had been for four years on and off probation in Harvard College and had not yet received his degree. In college he had seemed dull. He probably thought he worked, because his life was broken into, more or less, by college exercises, which he attended with some regularity. Now he is really working, with no time to make up college deficiencies, ready to admit that in college he hardly knew the meaning of work,

and to say simply and spontaneously, "I made a fool of myself in college." Another student, who did nothing in his studies, who spent four or five thousand dollars a year, and who constantly hired tutors to do his thinking, was finally expelled because he got a substitute to write an examination for him. Home trouble followed college trouble; he was thrown on himself and into the cold world; and he became a man. From scrubbing street cars, he was promoted to running them; from running them to holding a place of trust with men to do his orders. "Every day," he said, "I feel the need of what I threw away at college. Do you think if I came back I should need any more tutors? I'd go through quicker than anything, with nobody to help me. What sent me away was the one dishonest thing in my life." The dishonest thing came about through loafing.

Even socially, as I have intimated, the

loafer seldom or never wins the highest college success. Graduating classes bestow their honors on men who have "done something," — athletics, college journalism, debating, if you will, not necessarily hard study in the college course, but hard and devoted work in something, and work with an unselfish desire to help the college and the class. At Harvard College in the class of 1899 all three marshals graduated with distinction in their studies. By the beginning of the Senior year the class knows the men to be relied on, the men who are "there," and knows that they are men of active life.

I have spoken earlier of a student's responsibility to some unknown girl who is to be his wife. What is his responsibility to a known girl with whom in college days he falls in love? Just as college Faculties are blind to the effect of social ambition in students, they are blind to the effect of sweethearts. I

do not quite know what they could do if their eyes were opened; for college rules, happily, must be independent of sweethearts. I mean merely that scores of cases in which students break rules, "cut" lectures, disappear for a day or two without permission, and do other things that look rebellious, are readily accounted for by the disquieting influence of girls. What students do (or don't) when they are in love is a pretty good test of their character. One drops his work altogether, and devotes what time he cannot spend with the girl to meditating upon her. He can think of nothing else; and accordingly for her sake he becomes useless. Another sets his teeth, and works hard. "She is," he says naturally enough, "infinitely above me. How She ever can care for me, I do not know; whether She ever will, I do not know; but I will be what I can and do what I can. I will do whatever I do as if I were doing it for Her.

I *am* doing it for Her. If I succeed, it will be through Her; if my success pleases Her, I shall be repaid."

No girl worth having will think better of a man for shirking his plain duty in order to hang about her. No girl likes a "quitter;" and most girls agree with the heroine of Mr. Kipling's beautiful story, "William the Conqueror," when she says, "I like men who do things." The story shows with profound and exquisite truth how two persons of strong character may grow into each other's love and into an understanding of it by doing their separate duties. To go on, girl or no girl, without excuses small or great; to do the appointed task and to do it cheerfully amid all distractions, all sorrows, all heartaches; to make routine (not blind but enlightened routine) your friend — thus it is that by and by when you meet the hard blows of the world you can

"Go labor on; spend and be spent."

Thus it is that you find the strength which is born of trained capacity for interest in daily duty.

On the banks of the Connecticut is a school without a loafer in it. The scholars are needy for the most part, and so grimly in earnest that only a printed regulation restrains them from getting up "before 5 A. M." without permission. I am far from recommending study before breakfast, or loss of the night's sleep; but I admire the whole-hearted energy with which these boys and grown men seize the opportunity of their lives. I admire the same energy in athletics, if a student will only remember that his athletics are for his college, not his college for his athletics.

One more caution for college life and for after life. Do not let your ideals get shopworn. Keep the glory of your youth. A man with no visions, be he young or old, is a poor thing. There is no place like a college for visions and ideals; and

it is through our visions, through our ideals, that we keep high our standard of character and life. No man's character is fixed; and no responsible man is overconfident of his own. It is the part of every boy when he arrives at manhood to recognize as one of his greatest dangers the fading of the vision, and to set himself against this danger with all his might. It is only the man with ideals who is founded on a rock, and resists the rains and the floods.

A vigorous young fellow, fresh from college, went into a business house at four dollars a week, and rapidly rose to a well-paid and responsible position. One day he received from a member of the firm an order to do something that he thought dishonorable. He showed the order to the member of the firm whom he knew best, and asked him what he thought of it.

"Come and dine with me," said his patron, "and we will talk it over."

"Excuse me," said the young man. "Any other day I should be glad to dine with you; but this matter is business."

"Look!" said the other. "Business is war; and if you do not do these things in business, you can't live."

"I don't believe it," said the young man. "If I did, I should n't be here. I leave your employ Saturday night;" — and, to the amazement of the firm, he left it forever.

"And virtue's whole sum is but know and dare,"

said a great poet in one of his greatest moments. It takes a man with ideals to begin all over again, abandoning the kind of work in which he has won conspicuous success, and abandoning it because he finds that its methods, though accepted by business men generally, are for him dishonorable.

In and out of college the man with ideals helps, so far as in him lies, his

college and his country. It is hard for a boy to understand that in life, whatever he does, he helps to make or mar the name of his college. I have said "in life" — I may say also "in death." Not long since, I saw a Harvard Senior on what proved to be his death-bed. The people at the hospital declared that they had never seen such pain borne with such fortitude, — "and," said the Medical Visitor of the University, "he was through it all such a gentleman." A day or two before his death an attendant asked him whether he felt some local pain. "I did not," said he, "until you gave me that medicine." Then instantly he added, miserably weak and suffering as he was, "I beg your pardon. You know and I don't. It may be the medicine had nothing to do with my pain." I believe no man or woman in the ward saw that boy die without seeing also a new meaning and a new beauty in the college whose name he bore. As has often been said, the youth

who loves his Alma Mater will always ask, not "What can she do for me?" but "What can I do for her?"

Responsibility is — first, last, and always — the burden of my song, a student's responsibility to home, to fellow students, to school, to college, and (let me add once more) to the girl whom he will ask some day to be his wife. "Moral taste," as Miss Austen calls it, is nothing without moral force. "If," said a college President to a Freshman class, "you so live that in a few years you will be a fit companion for an intellectual, high-minded, pure-hearted woman, you will not go far wrong." Keep her in mind always, or, if you are not imaginative enough for that, remember that the lines

> "No spring nor summer's beauty hath such grace
> As I have seen in one autumnal face"

were written of a good man's mother.

FROM PRINCIPLES OF PSYCHOLOGY

HABIT

This is a part of the chapter on Habit from the "Principles of Psychology" by William James. The chapter is a remarkable scientific treatise as well as a literary classic. Unfortunately it is too long to be reprinted in full here. After dealing with the physiological aspects of the subject, Professor James concludes the essays with this passage.

THIS brings us by a very natural transition to the *ethical implications of the law of habit.* They are numerous and momentous. Dr. Carpenter, from whose "Mental Physiology" we have quoted, has so prominently enforced the principle that our organs grow to the way in which they have been exercised, and dwelt upon its consequences, that his book almost deserves to be called a work of edification, on this account alone. We need make no apology, then,

for tracing a few of these consequences ourselves:

"Habit a second nature! Habit is ten times nature," the Duke of Wellington is said to have exclaimed; and the degree to which this is true no one can probably appreciate as well as one who is a veteran soldier himself. The daily drill and the years of discipline end by fashioning a man completely over again, as to most of the possibilities of his conduct.

"There is a story, which is credible enough, though it may not be true, of a practical joker, who, seeing a discharged veteran carrying home his dinner, suddenly called out, 'Attention!' whereupon the man instantly brought his hands down, and lost his mutton and potatoes in the gutter. The drill had been thorough, and its effects had become embodied in the man's nervous structure." [1]

[1] Huxley's *Elementary Lessons in Physiology*, lesson XII.

Riderless cavalry-horses, at many a battle, have been seen to come together and go through their customary evolutions at the sound of the bugle-call. Most trained domestic animals, dogs and oxen, and omnibus- and car-horses seem to be machines almost pure and simple, undoubtingly, unhesitatingly doing from minute to minute the duties they have been taught, and giving no sign that the possibility of an alternative ever suggests itself to their mind. Men grown old in prison have asked to be readmitted after being once set free. In a railroad accident to a travelling menagerie in the United States some time in 1884, a tiger, whose cage had broken open, is said to have emerged, but presently crept back again, as if too much bewildered by his new responsibilities, so that he was without difficulty secured.

Habit is thus the enormous fly-wheel of society, its most precious conserva-

tive agent. It alone is what keeps us all within the bounds of ordinance, and saves the children of fortune from the envious uprisings of the poor. It alone prevents the hardest and most repulsive walks of life from being deserted by those brought up to tread therein. It keeps the fisherman and the deck-hand at sea through the winter; it holds the miner in his darkness, and nails the countryman to his log-cabin and his lonely farm through all the months of snow; it protects us from invasion by the natives of the desert and the frozen zone. It dooms us all to fight out the battle of life upon the lines of our nurture or our early choice, and to make the best of a pursuit that disagrees, because there is no other for which we are fitted, and it is too late to begin again. It keeps different social strata from mixing. Already at the age of twenty-five you see the professional mannerism settling down on the young commercial

traveller, on the young doctor, on the young minister, on the young counsellor-at-law. You see the little lines of cleavage running through the character, the tricks of thought, the prejudices, the ways of the "shop," in a word, from which the man can by-and-by no more escape than his coat-sleeve can suddenly fall into a new set of folds. On the whole, it is best he should not escape. It is well for the world that in most of us, by the age of thirty, the character has set like plaster, and will never soften again.

If the period between twenty and thirty is the critical one in the formation of intellectual and professional habits, the period below twenty is more important still for the fixing of *personal* habits, properly so called, such as vocalization and pronunciation, gesture, motion, and address. Hardly ever is a language learned after twenty spoken without a foreign accent; hardly ever can a

youth transferred to the society of his betters unlearn the nasality and other vices of speech bred in him by the associations of his growing years. Hardly ever, indeed, no matter how much money there be in his pocket, can he even learn to *dress* like a gentleman-born. The merchants offer their wares as eagerly to him as to the veriest "swell," but he simply *cannot* buy the right things. An invisible law, as strong as gravitation, keeps him within his orbit, arrayed this year as he was the last; and how his better-bred acquaintances contrive to get the things they wear will be for him a mystery till his dying day.

The great thing, then, in all education, is to *make our nervous system our ally instead of our enemy.* It is to fund and capitalize our acquisitions, and live at ease upon the interest of the fund. *For this we must make automatic and habitual, as early as possible, as many useful actions as we can,* and guard

against the growing into ways that are likely to be disadvantageous to us, as we should guard against the plague. The more of the details of our daily life we can hand over to the effortless custody of automatism, the more our higher powers of mind will be set free for their own proper work. There is no more miserable human being than one in whom nothing is habitual but indecision, and for whom the lighting of every cigar, the drinking of every cup, the time of rising and going to bed every day, and the beginning of every bit of work, are subjects of express volitional deliberation. Full half the time of such a man goes to the deciding, or regretting, of matters which ought to be so ingrained in him as practically not to exist for his consciousness at all. If there be such daily duties not yet ingrained in any one of my readers, let him begin this very hour to set the matter right.

In Professor Bain's chapter on "The

Moral Habits" there are some admirable practical remarks laid down. Two great maxims emerge from his treatment. The first is that in the acquisition of a new habit, or the leaving off of an old one, we must take care to *launch ourselves with as strong and decided an initiative as possible.* Accumulate all the possible circumstances which shall reinforce the right motives; put yourself assiduously in conditions that encourage the new way; make engagements incompatible with the old; take a public pledge, if the case allows; in short, envelop your resolution with every aid you know. This will give your new beginning such a momentum that the temptation to break down will not occur as soon as it otherwise might; and every day during which a breakdown is postponed adds to the chances of its not occurring at all.

The second maxim is: *Never suffer an exception to occur till the new habit is se-*

curely rooted in your life. Each lapse is like the letting fall of a ball of string which one is carefully winding up; a single slip undoes more than a great many turns will wind again. *Continuity* of training is the great means of making the nervous system act infallibly right. As Professor Bain says:

"The peculiarity of the moral habits, contradistinguishing them from the intellectual acquisitions, is the presence of two hostile powers, one to be gradually raised into the ascendant over the other. It is necessary, above all things, in such a situation, never to lose a battle. Every gain on the wrong side undoes the effect of many conquests on the right. The essential precaution, therefore, is so to regulate the two opposing powers that the one may have a series of uninterrupted successes, until repetition has fortified it to such a degree as to enable it to cope with the opposition, under any circumstances. This is the theoretically best career of mental progress."

The need of securing success at the *outset* is imperative. Failure at first is apt to dampen the energy of all future attempts, whereas past experience of success nerves one to future vigor. Goethe says to a man who consulted him about an enterprise but mistrusted his own powers: "Ach! you need only blow on your hands!" And the remark illustrates the effect on Goethe's spirits of his own habitually successful career. Professor Baumann, from whom I borrow the anecdote,[1] says that the collapse of barbarian nations when Europeans come among them is due to their despair of ever succeeding as the newcomers do in the larger tasks of life. Old ways are broken and new ones not formed. The question of "tapering-off," in abandoning such habits as drink and opium-indulgence, comes in here, and is a question about which experts differ within

[1] See the admirable passage about success at the outset, in his *Handbuch der Moral* (1878), pp. 38–43.

certain limits, and in regard to what may be best for an individual case. In the main, however, all expert opinion would agree that abrupt acquisition of the new habit is the best way, *if there be a real possibility of carrying it out.* We must be careful not to give the will so stiff a task as to insure its defeat at the very outset; but, *provided one can stand it*, a sharp period of suffering, and then a free time, is the best thing to aim at, whether in giving up a habit like that of opium, or in simply changing one's hours of rising or of work. It is surprising how soon a desire will die of inanition if it be *never* fed.

"One must first learn, unmoved, looking neither to the right nor left, to walk firmly on the straight and narrow path, before one can begin 'to make one's self over again.' He who every day makes a fresh resolve is like one who, arriving at the edge of the ditch he is to leap, forever stops and returns for a fresh run. Without *unbroken* advance

there is no such thing as *accumulation* of the ethical forces possible, and to make this possible, and to exercise us and habituate us in it, is the sovereign blessing of regular *work*."[1]

A third maxim may be added to the preceding pair: *Seize the very first possible opportunity to act on every resolution you make, and on every emotional prompting you may experience in the direction of the habits you aspire to gain.* It is not in the moment of their forming, but in the moment of their producing *motor effects*, that resolves and aspirations communicate the new "set" to the brain. As the author last quoted remarks:

"The actual presence of the practical opportunity alone furnishes the fulcrum upon which the lever can rest, by means of which the moral will may multiply its strength, and raise itself aloft. He who has no solid ground to press against will never get beyond the stage of empty gesture-making."

[1] J. Bahnsen: *Beiträge zu Charakterologie* (1867), vol. I, p. 209.

No matter how full a reservoir of *maxims* one may possess and no matter how good one's *sentiments* may be, if one have not taken advantage of every concrete opportunity to *act* one's character may remain entirely unaffected for the better. With mere good intentions, hell is proverbially paved. And this is an obvious consequence of the principles we have laid down. A "character," as J. S. Mill says, "is a completely fashioned will"; and a will, in the sense in which he means it, is an aggregate of tendencies to act in a firm and prompt and definite way upon all the principal emergencies of life. A tendency to act only becomes effectively ingrained in us in proportion to the uninterrupted frequency with which the actions actually occur, and the brain "grows" to their use. Every time a resolve or a fine glow of feeling evaporates without bearing practical fruit is worse than a chance lost; it works so as positively to hinder

future resolutions and emotions from taking the normal path of discharge. There is no more contemptible type of human character than that of the nerveless sentimentalist and dreamer, who spends his life in a weltering sea of sensibility and emotion, but who never does a manly concrete deed. Rousseau, inflaming all the mothers of France, by his eloquence, to follow Nature and nurse their babies themselves, while he sends his own children to the foundling hospital, is the classical example of what I mean. But every one of us in his measure, whenever, after glowing for an abstractly formulated Good, he practically ignores some actual case, among the squalid "other particulars" of which that same Good lurks disguised, treads straight on Rousseau's path. All Goods are disguised by the vulgarity of their concomitants, in this work-a-day world; but woe to him who can only recognize them when he thinks them in their pure

and abstract form! The habit of excessive novel-reading and theatre-going will produce true monsters in this line. The weeping of a Russian lady over the fictitious personages in the play, while her coachman is freezing to death on the seat outside, is the sort of thing that everywhere happens on a less glaring scale. Even the habit of excessive indulgence in music, for those who are neither performers themselves nor musically gifted enough to take it in a purely intellectual way, has probably a relaxing effect upon the character. One becomes filled with emotions which habitually pass without prompting to any deed, and so the inertly sentimental condition is kept up. The remedy would be, never to suffer one's self to have an emotion at a concert, without expressing it afterward in *some* active way.[1]

[1] See for remarks on this subject a readable article by Miss V. Scudder on "Musical Devotees and Morals," in the *Andover Review* for January, 1887.

Let the expression be the least thing in the world — speaking genially to one's aunt, or giving up one's seat in a horse-car, if nothing more heroic offers — but let it not fail to take place.

These latter cases make us aware that it is not simply *particular lines* of discharge, but also *general forms* of discharge, that seem to be grooved out by habit in the brain. Just as, if we let our emotions evaporate, they get into a way of evaporating; so there is reason to suppose that if we often flinch from making an effort, before we know it the effort-making capacity will be gone; and that, if we suffer the wandering of our attention, presently it will wander all the time. Attention and effort are, as we shall see later, but two names for the same psychic fact. To what brain-processes they correspond we do not know. The strongest reason for believing that they do depend on brain-processes at all, and are not pure acts of

the spirit, is just this fact, that they seem in some degree subject to the law of habit, which is a material law. As a final practical maxim, relative to these habits of the will, we may, then, offer something like this: *Keep the faculty of effort alive in you by a little gratuitous exercise every day.* That is, be systematically ascetic or heroic in little unnecessary points, do every day or two something for no other reason than that you would rather not do it, so that when the hour of dire need draws nigh, it may find you not unnerved and untrained to stand the test. Asceticism of this sort is like the insurance which a man pays on his house and goods. The tax does him no good at the time, and possibly may never bring him a return. But if the fire *does* come, his having paid it will be his salvation from ruin. So with the man who has daily inured himself to habits of concentrated attention, energetic volition, and self-denial in unneces-

sary things. He will stand like a tower when everything rocks around him, and when his softer fellow-mortals are winnowed like chaff in the blast.

The physiological study of mental conditions is thus the most powerful ally of hortatory ethics. The hell to be endured hereafter, of which theology tells, is no worse than the hell we make for ourselves in this world by habitually fashioning our characters in the wrong way. Could the young but realize how soon they will become mere walking bundles of habits, they would give more heed to their conduct while in the plastic state. We are spinning our own fates, good or evil, and never to be undone. Every smallest stroke of virtue or of vice leaves its never so little scar. The drunken Rip Van Winkle, in Jefferson's play, excuses himself for every fresh dereliction by saying, "I won't count this time!" Well! he may not count it, and a kind Heaven may not count it;

but it is being counted none the less. Down among his nerve-cells and fibres the molecules are counting it, registering and storing it up to be used against him when the next temptation comes. Nothing we ever do, is, in strict scientific literalness, wiped out. Of course, this has its good side as well as its bad one. As we become permanent drunkards by so many separate drinks, so we become saints in the moral, and authorities and experts in the practical and scientific spheres, by so many separate acts and hours of work. Let no youth have any anxiety about the upshot of his education, whatever the line of it may be. If he keep faithfully busy each hour of the working-day, he may safely leave the final result to itself. He can with perfect certainty count on waking up some fine morning, to find himself one of the competent ones of his generation, in whatever pursuit he may have singled out. Silently, between all the

details of his business, the *power of judging* in all that class of matter will have built itself up within him as a possession that will never pass away. Young people should know this truth in advance. The ignorance of it has probably engendered more discouragement and faint-heartedness in youths embarking on arduous careers than all other causes put together.

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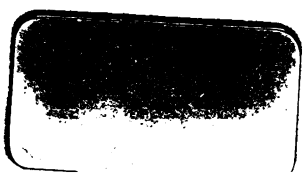

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